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ABSTRACT

In spite of almost 30 years of busing to achieve racial balance, there continues to be a significant gap between White and African American children in terms of school achievement, and African American students still score below national averages on achievement tests. As the city of Pittsburgh (Pennsylvania) considers whether to reduce or maintain busing, a review of the evidence shows that there are no consistent indications of improved academic performance among minority children as a result of busing. Nor is there evidence of improved self-image of minority children as a result of busing. In fact, there is no evidence of better race relations in cities where busing has been widespread, and there are signs of continued strife and controversy that suggest that forced busing solidifies prejudice and inflames racial tensions, further dividing communities. In Pittsburgh, the financially strapped Board of Education recently backed down from a proposal to reduce busing that would save almost $10 million in transportation costs, and instead adopted a plan that would keep busing essentially intact while costing the district an additional $10 million. A group of citizens, vowing to end forced busing in the city's schools, has moved to have the issue placed on the spring ballot as a nonbinding referendum. (Contains 83 references.) (Author/SLD)

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Forced Busing:

A Staff Report of the
Allegheny Institute for Public Policy

ED 413 367

Louis Chandler, Ph.D.
School of Education
University of Pittsburgh
Pittsburgh, Pa. 15260
e-mail: chandler@fs1.sched.pitt.edu

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Forced Busing:

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Executive Summary

The forced busing of schoolchildren to achieve racial balance has been called by some a well-intentioned but failed experiment. Pittsburgh taxpayers have spent nearly $280 million on busing since 1982. Yet, despite almost 30 years of busing to achieve racial balance, particularly at the high school and middle school levels, there continues to be a significant gap between white and African American children in terms of school achievement, and African American children continue to score well below national averages. After decades of effort and expenditures to fund this massive social experiment a review of the evidence shows that:

- There are no consistent indications of improved academic performance among minority children as a result of busing.
- There is no evidence of improved self-image of minority children as a result of being bused to predominately white schools.
- There is no evidence of better race relations in cities where busing has been widespread, and in fact, there are signs of continued racial strife and controversy suggesting that forced busing solidifies prejudice and inflames racial tension often dividing communities.
- In Pittsburgh, the financially-strapped Board of Education recently backtracked from a proposal to reduce busing and save almost 10 million dollars in transportation costs, and instead adopted a plan that would keep busing essentially intact while costing the district an additional 10 million dollars. A group of citizens, vowing to end forced busing in the city's schools, has moved to have the issue placed on the spring ballot as a non-binding referendum.

Forced Busing:

A Project of the
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Recently, the Pittsburgh Public schools put forth a proposal to end busing and return to neighborhood schools. In the face of some opposition to that plan the Board of Public Education backtracked recently backtracked from its proposal to reduce busing and save almost 10 million dollars in transportation costs, and instead adopted a plan that would keep busing essentially intact while costing the district an additional 10 million dollars. Pittsburgh is not alone in re-examining forced busing, and the experience of the city schools suggests that it may be time for a review of what we've learned after almost 30 years of busing.

Racial integration is seen as a way to bring about full participation of minority groups in the social, political, and economic life of the nation. In the U.S. Supreme Court's 1954 decision in *Brown vs The Board of Education of Topeka,* the court declared that schools segregated by law *(de jure* segregation) were not providing equal educational opportunity. Lower courts later extended that line of reasoning, ruling that schools segregated by housing patterns *(de facto* segregation) were similarly not providing equal opportunity. In the wake of such decisions, and especially with the impetus of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, a flurry of litigation and court actions followed as "remedies" were mandated to further the cause of integration through the nation's schools.

One of the more controversial methods devised to further integration has been the busing of schoolchildren. Under busing programs, often mandated by court order or by state agencies,

children are assigned to schools based solely on the schools' racial composition, a consideration that overrides the normal practice of assigning children to attend the schools nearest to their home.

The rationale behind busing has been described as "the promotion of educational equality", and "the provision of interracial contact" (Cohen, 1987). It was thought that more integrated schools would bring about greater educational progress for minority children (Coleman, 1966). In addition, advocates of busing felt that increased interracial exposure would be beneficial (Rossell, 1990). It would presumably lead to greater self -esteem for minority students, and reduce racial prejudice (Taylor & Rickel, 1981). Therefore, it was assumed that busing minority students to white neighborhoods would help them to achieve better, and in the process, foster better self esteem and race relations.

Since the 1960's American communities have attempted to implement court-ordered busing with varying degrees of success, and seldom without some conflict. Urban schools in cities with large minority populations such as Boston, New York, Chicago and Los Angeles have often been the centers of heated controversy, but the schools in Pittsburgh, Nashville, Charlotte, Norfolk, St. Louis, Milwaukee, Baton Rouge, and countless other communities have also experienced increased racial tension and, in some cases, open hostility, as they found themselves embroiled in controversy over the issue of forced busing.

Even as busing was being widely implemented, other coercive methods were introduced by courts intent on rectifying what they saw as a denial of equal opportunity to minority children. Where busing was deemed inadequate to do the job, school redistricting was tried, where district lines were re-drawn and local authorities were ordered to go beyond the border of school systems to incorporate students that reside in contiguous systems (Gordon, 1989).

By the 1980's, after considerable resistance and turmoil, there was gradual retreat from court-ordered busing as advocates of desegregation began to propose less coercive methods involving the voluntary re-assignment of children, such as specialized and magnet schools. Christine Rossell, (1990) who has done extensive studies of desegregation, maintains that this tactic represents a shift from what she has called the "command and control" model of policy making to the "public choice" model.

Recently, Pennsylvania Governor Tom Ridge, in signing legislation to return to neighborhood schools, has characterized busing as "a well-intentioned but failed experiment" (the Observer, 1996). But has the experiment failed? What has been achieved; and at what cost?

After 30 years of busing it seems timely to examine the record to see if coercive busing programs have lived up to their promises. Have minority children made greater educational progress? Can any such gains that have been made be attributed to busing? Is there any evidence to show that race relations are better as a result of forced busing? And finally, what have been the costs of this experiment?

Academic Effects

How well a child does in school is a very complex issue, and no single factor, by itself, assures academic success. School achievement depends on an individual child's ability and motivation, as well as on a number of environmental factors that have been found to link with educational progress such as: single parent family, low parent education, limited English proficiency, low family income, sibling dropout, and being home alone more than three hours on weekdays. And minorities have been found to have a greater risk for these environmental factors that non-minorities (NELS, 1988).

Within these limitations, what evidence is there that forced busing has had an effect on the achievement of minority children? The initial report, widely cited as the basis for the assertion that minority children do better when attending predominately white schools, was prepared by sociologist James Coleman in the mid-1960's (Coleman, 1966). Coleman's survey found that blacks attending schools in which most of the student were white, scored higher on achievement tests than those attending schools in which most of the students were black. And his findings were often cited by busing advocates in efforts to increase integration in local schools.

For many years the conclusions of the Coleman report remained unchallenged, although Coleman, some twelve years later, cast doubt on his own earlier findings. He noted that achievement effects found in actual systems that had been desegregated, were smaller and in some cases did not exist. He went on to argue that busing for desegregation was not found to be particularly beneficial to black students, and besides it was contributing to white middle class flight (Clark, 1981; Carsburd & Burleson, 1982).

It is not unusual to find that studies which attempt to measure the effects of busing on achievement are plagued with difficulties. In some cases, there may be no comparable baseline (pre-busing) data available against which change might be measured. Very often an appropriate comparison group (one which is well-matched to a bused group, but not undergoing the busing experience) is not available. Then too, since there are so many factors that contribute to academic performance, it is often difficult to isolate the effect of a single factor, such as busing. Of course, even if a relationship is found between busing and better achievement, it does not necessarily follow that busing *causes* better achievement. Finally, effects over time may be quite different than short-term effects, but longitudinal studies which are conducted over several years of busing are rare. With these limitations in mind, a representative review of the findings will be considered.

The difficulties in assessing whether busing has been successful may be seen in a typical "success" report, this one in implementing busing at the public schools in Springfield, Massachusetts (Roberts & George, 1981). The report of the busing program in Springfield presents test data from achievement tests converted into percentiles, and we are told that all racial-ethnic subgroups showed increases over pre-desegregation levels. The authors suggest the increases are explained by extra funds available to hire more staff to address the disparity in achievement levels. Surely, if this is the case, then the extra attention, more money to hire additional teachers and staff, etc., can be said to help increase the achievement scores of all schoolchildren (with or without busing).

A similar criticism may be made of findings by the Dallas Independent School District, (Webster & Chadborn, 1981) and by the Clark County (Nevada) School District (Clark County Schools, 1981) which reported gains in percentiles from various achievement tests given during the years of busing. Such studies call into question what other factors may also be accounting for the changes, such as the increased attention being given to the schools, and changes in the educational programs such as those cited in the Springfield report.

A better controlled study of busing and achievement was reported in the case of the Norfolk Schools (Itka, 1994). Itka, taking advantage of the elimination of forced busing in the Norfolk Schools, saw an opportunity to compare the achievement of students under mandated busing and again once that busing had been eliminated. She found post-busing declines in achievement test scores for both African-American and White students. However, she also reported that busing *per se* accounted for very little of the variance in the scores, as other factors, such as individual characteristics, and school characteristics also affected the results.

Just as these studies suggest some possible support for the theory that busing may help in minority student achievement, there have been several studies which have arrived at opposite conclusions. For example, Howell (1983) found that black students who walked to a predominately black elementary school had higher achievement scores than black students who were being bused to a predominately white school.

More compelling evidence comes from a critical analysis of test scores in New Castle County, Delaware both before and after, busing. D'Onofrio (1983) compared achievement scores to a state-wide mean, and found that, while both white and black students' scores showed some increase during the busing years, there was also an increased gap between the scores of black and white students after busing began. He concluded that, insofar as achievement was concerned, busing had been a failure in New Castle County.

Another well-designed study of the effects of court-ordered busing on minority students, in the Austin Independent School District compared the test scores of minority children and found that bused students made smaller gains in both reading and mathematics than their non-bused peers (Carsrud & Burleson, 1982). The authors reminded us that desegregation efforts are effected by a number of things such as the type of desegregation and the methods used in carrying it out, and they go on to suggest that their findings may show that perceptions of minority students in the class, issues of white flight, and culture shock, may all influence achievement gains among minority students.

In an attempt to clarify the sometimes conflicting results as to the relationship between busing and black student learning, Scott (1983) re-examined the data in five major reviews of the subject. His thorough re-assessment of all the primary data most often cited in debates on the efficacy of busing, found no evidence of verifiable, long-term, beneficial learning effects on blacks that could be definitely traced to busing.

It was this lack of supporting evidence that led former Assistant Attorney General in charge of Civil Rights Enforcement, William Reynolds (1983) to conclude, in evaluating forced busing, that no positive effects on achievement, or on attempted integration had been found.

Psychological and Social Effects

What have we learned about the psychological effects on students involved in this experiment? In one of the few studies of the psychological effects on bused students, Streitmatter (1988) examined identity development. Her study found that minority children tended to feel uncomfortable in the school to which they were bused, and she noted that when children do not feel comfortable in their learning environment, they are less willing to experiment and explore, and so their identity development will be adversely affected.

Taylor and Rickel (1981) looked at the social integration of bused students and found that bused children tended to choose other bused children as their friends, thus maintaining racial isolation. They concluded that the shared experience of being bused fosters friendships within the group.

Gable and colleagues (1983) set out to study the post-high school occupational attainment of a group of inner-city students, who voluntarily participated in busing, as opposed to those who dropped out and those who did not participate. Bused students exhibited higher levels of career aspiration, and significantly more career planning than non-participants. While the authors were careful to provide an appropriate comparison group, one wonders what it might be about the families (and specifically the parents) who have volunteered their children for such an effort. Might they not value education more highly, believing in the value of education in bettering oneself, and would similar results have been found if the sample were of children in forced busing programs?

In terms of how they have experienced busing, the results from students are mixed. Some have reported positive experiences as a result of desegregation, while for others the experience has been a negative one. This contradicts the prevailing assumption that busing minority children to white schools necessarily fosters better race relations; simply putting black children in predominately white classrooms does not ensure positive social learning.

After reviewing the data on the effects of desegregation on students' ability to interact effectively, Miller (1989) concluded the results were often contradictory. She then looked at the desegregation experiences of minority students by studying the ways adolescent Black and Puerto Rican students coped with being bused to high schools under a voluntary busing program. She found that while desegregation had different effects in different schools, there was no evidence to show that busing fostered more positive racial relations, and she went on to argue that other qualities must be taken into account such as the quality of the contact, and the type of strategy the minority student adopts in an effort to cope with the new school situation.

One further thing needs to be said about the psychological effects of busing. Social scientists tend to see problems in terms of people in groups, and perhaps for that reason they often seem enamored with statistics. But Thomas Cottell (1976) reminds us that the human dimension is often lost in the statistics. His study, of the effects of busing on a few chosen people, reminds us of the often agonizing and conflicting feelings of those involved in the experiment.

The famed psychologist Gordon Allport (1954) in his classic work on prejudice, has argued that intergroup contact, in and of itself, is not an instant panacea for interracial hostilities (Miller, 1989). Still, some have maintained that increased interracial exposure would lead to more positive race relations, while others continue to argue that forced busing, rather than contributing to better racial relations, has fostered divisiveness in communities.

There are many accounts in the popular press which support the latter view. Highly publicized turmoil over the busing in the schools have fanned the fires of racial unrest in one city after another, leading to the conclusion that federal mandated desegregation of the schools

mobilizes whites against busing and ignites racial unrest. In fact, this calls into question the underlying notion that increased racial contact will necessarily result in better race relations. To the contrary, some have concluded that increased interracial exposure in schools and neighborhoods may actually trigger racial and ethnic conflicts (Olzak et al., 1992; 1994).

The conventional wisdom is that whites oppose forced busing; minorities favor it. While the strength of white opposition varies depending on a number of factors such as how closely involved they were in the schools, in general findings support the view that most whites oppose busing. The picture within the minority community is not as clear. Some have reported that, for the most part, blacks support busing (Kimble, 1980), while others have found that that support is qualified in that blacks often don't like busing but regard other problems as more serious (Lloyd, 1983). Still others have identified a range of opinion within the Black community. For example, a survey of White, Chicano, and Black parents in Chicago found that while most favored desegregation of the schools, they rejected busing and mandatory desegregation programs in favor of neighborhood schools and voluntary desegregation plans (Ogletree & Mitchell, 1981).

Results of a survey of New York City residents on race-related issues also called into question the prevailing beliefs about racial opinions. The researchers found that that the racial divisions on busing were not automatic. The diversity of black opinion was found to be related to differences in age, income and education (Bolce & Gray, 1979). Some have argued that white opposition to busing is another example of racism, and while surveys have suggested that traditional prejudice may be involved, white opposition is also based on the many costs, and the perceived lack of benefits of busing.

Still another argument advanced by advocates of busing is that, over time, attitudes will soften. There has been little longitudinal research that looks at attitudes over time in communities where busing has been ordered, but one such survey found that after 7 years of busing, the community continued to oppose busing. White suburban opposition had lessened in magnitude and intensity, but city and black opposition increased during that period (Raffel, 1985).

After the first decade of busing, St John (1975) conducted a review of what had been learned. She summarized the situation this way: (1) white achievement has been unaffected in schools that remain majority white, but declined in schools that were majority black; (2) desegregation has not rapidly closed the achievement gap between minority and white students; (3) improvements in minority achievement are more likely in mathematics than in reading; (4) biracial schooling may have negative effects on the self-concepts of black students by lowering their educational and vocational aspirations; and (5) effects on attitudes and prejudice are sometimes positive and sometimes negative..

Busing has been, and continues to be, a divisive issue. Since forced busing began press accounts and coverage on the evening news have told an ongoing story of continued divisiveness and conflict over court-ordered busing in communities large and small across America. We have seen stories of demonstrations, acrimonious school board and community meetings, resentment, hostility, and sometimes open conflict between black and white students in the schools -- all of

which supports the view that busing solidifies prejudice and inflames racial tension. Meanwhile, coupled with these accounts in the popular press, there is little or no scientific evidence to suggest that busing has had positive psychological or social effects. In its second aim too, forced busing has been shown to be a failed social experiment.

The Costs of Busing

School costs have risen dramatically during the last twenty years, due in no small part to a plethora of federal and state mandates (LoVette, 1995). Schools have found themselves required to assist in curing a host of social ills. Bilingual and second language programs, private school aid, and the education of illegal aliens, are just a few of the costs levied on local schools, often with little or inadequate federal or state reimbursement. Schools have been called upon to attend to children's physical health and mental well-being, their sex education, nutrition, and general welfare in the form of day care and after-school programs, all of which distract from the schools' avowed purpose of providing basic education, and strain to the limits their human and financial resources.

Along with other costs, transportation costs have risen in response to various mandates. In some cases schools find themselves required to provide transportation to private school pupils, and in most cases they have to provide specialized transportation to children with special needs. One of the "hidden costs", seldom identified within the transportation budget, is the cost of busing done to achieve a more even racial balance (Humphries & Vincent, 1981). Although data on the financial costs directly associated with busing are hard to come by, some estimate of the costs involved may be found in case studies which analyzed the costs of a specific district's program.

For example, a study of a program initiated by the state to achieve a better racial balance in Milwaukee Wisconsin as a result of a federal court settlement, found per pupil costs nearly twice that of the state average. City-suburban busing was nearly half the entire per pupil cost of education in the average state district (Mitchell, 1988).

Still, the direct financial outlay to implement busing is only one dimension of the true costs involved. Travel time must be taken into account in a pupil's day, as educational and home schedules are juggled to meet the demands of transportation. In the process, afternoon activities may be cut short, and extracurricular activities often curtailed (Hale, 1993).

Finally, there are unintended consequences to busing. Like many well-meaning but poorly thought out government programs, the results are not always consistent with the avowed purpose of the program. In the case of busing, there has been growing recognition that, rather than promoting better integration, the end result is more racial isolation as whites withdraw from the local school system. Barely a year after desegregation had been imposed by court order in Boston, nearly one third of the white students affected had moved elsewhere (The Economist, 1991). Such changing demographics have become so great a problem that some school districts

have taken the "radical" step of re-introducing neighborhood schools in an effort to stem this "white flight".

The Norfolk Virginia Schools took such a step in the mid-1980's when it became apparent that the flight of White students from the public schools was re-segregating the schools (Armor, 1991). A controversy ensued as to whether or not the shifting demographic patterns could be traced to forced busing, and moreover whether canceling forced busing would entice white families back to Norfolk (Carr, 1990; Zeller, 1990; Carr & Zeigler, 1990). In any case, the shifting demographics clearly became a problem for the schools, and for those who advocate busing. If white families were to increasingly abandon city schools, the opportunities for increased racial contact would be reduced, the tax base would be eroded, and community support for the public schools would be further weakened.

Rossell (1988) took a closer look as to why white students withdraw by examining the data in two large school districts: Los Angeles and Baton Rouge. She found that mandatory assignments led to large school-loss rates. The factors which contributed to white withdraw included the busing distance, a decline in average achievement, and the proportion of minority students involved.

This white flight became such a problem that by the mid-1980s Reynolds (1984a) was moved to comment on the irony of busing programs that actually produced racial isolation on a broader scale. He pointed out that the consequent flight of economically-able parents from urban public schools contributed to the erosion of municipal tax bases, which in turn directly affected the ability of many school systems to provide quality public education to their students -- whether white or black.

Armor (1981), in an in-depth case study of the Los Angeles schools over a five-year period, illustrated the result of forced busing: massive white flight, and increases in the attendance of white children at private school. Thus, he concluded, busing does not end or reduce segregation.

One response to white flight by those who favor coercive methods to achieve greater integration, was to argue for greater metropolitanism, that is creating new school systems by forcing the merger of predominately white and predominately black schools districts. Even as busing programs have been struck down in recent years because either they didn't work or they have been counterproductive, we continue to find new coercive measures being imposed Recently, a new redistricting plan was proposed in a suburb of Philadelphia to achieve a more even racial balance in the schools (The Economist, 1996). Such re-districting and mergers, along with busing and the more general educational trend of consolidation, has resulted in the closing of many smaller neighborhood schools.

Increasingly the consequences of the loss of the neighborhood schools has been felt (Cowell & Guntermann, 1984), even as calls have been made for greater parent and community involvement in our schools. What we are seeing is a national trend back to the concept of neighborhood schools, and the end of the busing experiment (Berger, 1983).

The Pittsburgh Experience

Desegregation efforts in the Pittsburgh city schools may be traced back to the 1960's when a series of open enrollment plans were first put forth. Under such a plan a child might apply to be transferred from the school he or she would normally attend to another city school. In time, "racial balance" became one of the factors that had to be considered in approving such a transfer, and the yearly announcement of the limited open enrollment plan was sometimes accompanied by published racial quotas (Pittsburgh Board of Public Education, 1978a).

By adopting such a voluntary approach the Pittsburgh city schools implicitly recognized the need for greater integration of the schools, while rejecting coercive methods to achieve that goal. Increased local recognition of the issue may be seen by the formation of a citizen's advisory committee on racial equality, and by the Pittsburgh Board of Public Education's Annual Report for 1965 (Pittsburgh Board of Public Education, 1965), a report devoted solely to the subject of racial equality. The 1965 report summarized the position of the board at that time:

We are told to bring about the physical arrangements of children and schools so as to have "balanced" numbers of Negro and white children in the same schools. Racial integration is essentially a social and economic problem. It is a problem that cannot be solved by the schools alone through the manipulation of children into a contrived "balance".

Meanwhile, at the state level, the Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission (PHRC) was reviewing the racial composition of the Commonwealth's school districts. By 1968 they had concluded their review, and the Pittsburgh city schools was one of the districts directed to submit a desegregation plan to eliminate racial imbalance.

The initial response of the city schools was to reiterate existing policies which relied on transferring Negro students to predominately white schools through open enrollment plans, and eventually moving towards much larger consolidated high schools (the so-called "Great High Schools" plan) which, it was thought, would help to achieve a more even racial balance.

This response was found lacking by the PHRC, and negotiations towards a more acceptable plan were begun. In June 1971, after a series of extensions, the PHRC issued its final order mandating that a desegregation plan be in place for the 1971-72 school year. The school district appealed that order to Commonwealth Court citing, among other reasons, the resistance of parents who favored neighborhood schools (The Pittsburgh Press, 10/26/71). Gutkind (1983), who produced a valuable account of desegregation efforts in the city schools during this era, pointed out that parental resistance was to become "even more heated as the 1971-72 school year began."

At this time Pittsburgh, like many other communities across America, was exploring a number of paths to bring about greater integration in the schools, some methods more voluntary, some less so. In Pittsburgh, school authorities had begun to experiment with school re-organization to achieve a better racial balance. By 1971 children were being reassigned as part of a school re-organization plan and this included the assigning of white children to predominately black schools such as Knoxville Elementary School. This initiative was met with considerable resistance, and stiff parental opposition was to culminate in an injunction prohibiting the transfer of students to Knoxville

The Knoxville situation reached its peak a year later when Common Pleas Court judge Ralph Smith declared that "a state bordering on anarchy" existed in the public schools. The Judge stated that evidence showed that the school board had failed to make Knoxville a safe place conducive to learning, and that children had endured both physical and psychological harm from assaults, threats of extortion, and constant school disruption (The Pittsburgh Press, 11/4/71).

In August 1972, Commonwealth Court reached a decision regarding the city schools' appeal of the PHRC ruling by finding in favor of the PHRC. The board responded at their November meeting by restating their position that the board did not endorse the concept of forced busing for racial balance, and it went on to direct the staff not to include the elements of forced busing in its reorganization plan. This position was based on a motion by John Conoley, a black school board member. When asked to explain his position he replied: "Schools shouldn't be turned into public battlegrounds to resolve social problems which society couldn't ...The primary purpose of the school is to educate and protect the children."(The Pittsburgh Press, 11/22/72). Conoley suggested instead that the school board rely on magnet schools, voluntary open enrollment programs, and new school construction.

The resulting reorganization plan (Pittsburgh Board of Public Education, 1973) was a compromise. It relied on new construction, re-drawing attendance boundaries, the development of voluntary integrated magnet schools, and the voluntary transfer of students to other schools. This plan too encountered local opposition, and was ultimately rejected by the PHRC. During the next several years a series of plans were put forth in many variations as the hunt continued for a plan that would meet with agreement among the various constituencies, and win the approval of the PHRC.

The 1975 plan proposed by Superintendent Jerry Olsen was a typical example. Olsen's plan relied heavily on a set of system-wide feeder schools. The keystone of the plan was to develop, through new construction and renovation, 13 racially balanced middle schools. The feeder schools proposal, like its predecessors, encountered heavy opposition as witnessed in this report of a public meeting taken from the Pittsburgh Press (12/3/75):

...no support was voiced by any of the 27 speakers who represented groups ranging from community and parent-teacher organizations to civil rights associations.

Knoxville and Banksville area parents said the plan would destroy their communities Squirrel Hill area parents claimed it showed 'no respect' for city neighborhoods which are already racially integrated; and Homewood-Brushton area parents labeled it an 'outrage' because it creates 'black reservations.'

'Why do you want to spend money we don't want to give in order to send our children where we don't want them to go?' asked Mrs. Jean Fink, a representative of the Overbrook and Carrick Community Council.

She proposed her own desegregation plan for Pittsburgh schools: 'Open up every school in ten city to city-wide enrollment and I'll bet my house and my car that 95 percent of the people will send their children to schools which are the closest to their homes.

Olsen's plan, predictably, became mired in controversy. As the controversy raged, the concept of the "magnet school" began to emerge as one of the more appealing alternatives. A magnet school is a school, or program within a school, which has a special interest curriculum designed to attract the voluntary enrollment of students from throughout the school district. (Pittsburgh Board of Public Education, 1978b). Typically, magnet schools might focus on such areas as: mathematics and science, the "3 R's", health professions, creative and performing arts, law and public service, and foreign language (Pittsburgh Board of Public Education, 1978c).

In 1977 the school board held hearings to deal with student attendance patterns, where magnet schools were put forth as "optimal educational units limited to a specified racial proportion" (Pittsburgh Board of Public Education, 1977a). Later, they passed a formal resolution to formally explore a magnet school program (Board of Public Education, 1977b).

The PHRC had, by this time, extended their deadline several times and they were clearly getting impatient. The board was also feeling pressure from the Federal Office for Civil Rights and the US Civil Rights Commission. In addition, a series of lawsuits resulted in the courts becoming more intrusive in the process, mandating desegregation plans, closing schools and re-assigning students (Gutkind, 1983).

Within this contentious atmosphere, new desegregation proposals were being developed. As each new plan was formulated it became clear that a magnet schools would be at the heart of Pittsburgh's desegregation efforts, as indeed was the case with the plan that was finally accepted by the board in March 1979 (Pittsburgh Board of Public Education, 1979). It called for a three-year implementation and although it had some involuntary features, for the most part it relied on open enrollment and the new magnet schools concept.

This plan too, was rejected by the PHRC. While the board and school officials struggled to hammer out a compromise that would win approval, community protests grew louder at one point resulting in a school boycott (Pittsburgh Press, 2/5/80).

What was to be the final version of the desegregation plan was presented in 1980 (Pittsburgh Board of Public Education, 1980). Among other things, this version called for closing some neighborhood schools, and redrawing attendance boundaries. The plan was greeted with community outrage expressed in highly emotional testimony at a series of acrimonious public hearings.

This plan too, was rejected by the PHRC, who then went to court to stop the city schools from implementing it. Subsequently, the Commonwealth Court was to deny the PHRC request to stop the implementation and the plan, by now largely carried forth by its own momentum, went into effect in September 1980.

The implementation of the magnet school/desegregation plan, with its attendant logistical problems, was about to be launched in what was to be an era of declining enrollment throughout the system (DeMarco, 1983). Such a specialized program as magnet schools can be a costly proposition. Additional busing is involved as well as additional staff, re-designed curriculum and, in some cases, extensive modifications to existing facilities. The costs of this rather ambitious new initiative would have to be met, even as the student population declined and the tax base was consequently being eroded. The plan was thus put into place in a climate of uncertainty and confrontation, following a decade of bitter and often heated debate.

In time the magnet school concept would be expanded, racial quotas were set and various schools were designated as specialized schools. Yet while the proportion of schools that were magnet schools grew, school closings and consolidations continued to take place in the wake of the gradual enrollment decline. The declining tax base and rising costs of the schools, began to create budget problems that by the 1990's were demanding attention. By the mid-1990's a reexamination of the entire system seemed in order.

With this economic reality in mind, the board, in Spring 1995, began a study to see what it would take to make the schools more attractive, and a new organization plan, called The Redistricting Plan, emerged from that study (Pittsburgh Board of Public Education, 1996a). This system-wide plan would re-establish neighborhood schools by keeping students as close to their homes as possible while maintaining a substantial number of students in racially balanced schools by expanding the use of magnet schools and open enrollment. The plan was to include purchasing buildings, hiring new staff, expanding and renovating existing facilities; the costs to be financed by the several millions annually saved in transportation costs.

This plan, the first fundamental change in the desegregation plan in over a decade, managed to re-ignite many of the passions on both sides of the busing issue, and as a result it was met with predictable opposition with some arguing that it would lead to resegregation. The board seemed unprepared for the storm of criticism it had unleashed (Post-Gazette, 4/2/96; Tribune-Review, 4/4/96), and after experiencing the angry outcry at a series of community meetings, it bowed to public pressure, and came up with a revised plan with a slowed implementation schedule. The revised plan, according to board president Ron Suber, "strikes a balance between the twin goals of creating more neighborhood schools and maintaining diversity" (Pittsburgh Board of Public Education, 1996b). But the revised plan was seen by the supporters of redistricting as all but

abandoning plans for a district-wide neighborhood schools system (Tribune-Review, 4/29/96; 4/30/96). Richard Fellers, Executive Director of the Office of Business Affairs, said the original proposal was essentially a "break even" one with the costs of the new measures being offset by savings in transportation. In contrast, the revised plan which maintains diversity, is estimated at 1.8 million in 1996, and approximately 4 million each in 1997 and 1998. In sum, rather than saving 10 million dollars, the board's revised plan would cost an additional 10 million dollars (Post-Gazette, 4/30/96).

It has been estimated that the Pittsburgh City Schools have spent nearly 280 million dollars on busing since 1982 (The Observer, 3/97), yet the anticipated gains in achievement have failed to materialize. Even with this extensive busing program, the racial achievement gap between White and African American children remains (at the Elementary School level: 21% in Reading; 30% in Mathematics. At the Middle School level: 32 % in Reading; 34% in Mathematics) (Pittsburgh Board of Education, 1996).

Even as the city schools were backtracking from their original plan to reduce busing, other events were showing that in Pennsylvania, as in other places, forced busing was on the decline. In Harrisburg, House Bill 1689 had been introduced by State Representatives Frank Gigliotti and Harry Readshaw. The Bill would end the PHRC's ability to order mandatory busing and would limit the conditions under which busing might be ordered by the courts (Post-Gazette, 6/12/96). The Bill found wide support and was approved and signed into law by Governor Tom Ridge in July 1996. Ridge noted that the specifics of the bill "affected Pittsburgh more than any community". However, Pittsburgh School Board solicitor Robert Stephanko disagreed saying that the bill "is not going to affect the desegregation program in Pittsburgh one whit." (The Observer, 7/17/96). Rep. Gigoliotti said he and others in his legislative district would file suit to re-establish neighborhood schools if the city schools abandoned its plan (Tribune-Review, 5/1/96). The possibility was also being explored of placing the issue of neighborhood schools on the ballot as non-binding referendum.

As To The Future

By the mid-1980's it had become apparent that forced busing to achieve racial desegregation had been a failure, and may have even been counterproductive (Reynolds, 1984b; Armor, 1988). In time, those who continued to press for increased integration became divided over the next step. Some continued to advocate coercive government measures like closing local schools and mandating re-districting (Gordon, 1989), while others pushed for less coercive approaches such as voluntary transfer, open enrollment, various "choice" plans, and magnet schools (Rossell, 1990; Reynolds, 1981; Armor, 1995). The amount of freedom individual parents have in such "voluntary" programs varies from case to case depending on how much those responsible have bought into what Rossell (1990) has called the "Command and Control" model of policymaking.

One novel approach which seems to maximize the freedom of the individuals involved may be found in the work of Judge James Gorden who presided over the school desegregation plan in Jefferson County, Kentucky (Briley, 1985). Judge Gorden ruled that no minority child in a

neighborhood would be used for desegregation purposes. The effect of that ruling was to encourage black families to move into white school attendance areas, thus desegregating the neighborhood schools, an effect that was later well-documented.

Concurrent with the decline of forced busing we have seen increasing calls for the reemergence of the neighborhood school (Flygare, 1986). Advocates of neighborhood schools hold that they offer the promise of greater parental involvement and community support, two elements deemed essential for effective schools.

Still others have argued that the emphasis on busing has been misplaced in that it diverts attention from the quality education. (Reynolds, 1986). They maintain that the issue is not so much where students are educated, but whether they are given the best available education quality, wherever they live and regardless of race (Pinkeny, 1981)

The debate has now brought about a re-thinking of the role of the schools. Dennis Rittenmeyer (1986) was not the first to point out that the proper role for the schools is to provide education, although he did so quite effectively. He pointed out that using the schools to achieve racial balance, eliminate poverty, fight drugs abuse, prevent pregnancy and reduce youth suicide is simply too much to ask. Rittenmeyer reminds us that teachers and principals should be required to address educational issues, not unmet social needs. Anything that distracts from the core mission of the schools, is simply that -- a distraction.

Jencks and his colleagues (1972) at the Center for Educational Policy and Research at Harvard, have gone even farther in arguing that not only is it unrealistic to expect the schools to take on such social tasks, but it is unlikely that even if schools could be required to ensure that every child received an equally good education, adult society would hardly be more equal than it is now. What we are seeing is a fundamental questioning of what Milner (1972) has called the "persistent American illusion" that we can build an equal and just society solely by expanding educational opportunities. Milner argues that no such results have been found throughout the history of education in America, and Jencks and his colleagues support that argument by citing a wide range of other factors which influence adult equality.

Finally, one has to wonder about the role of parents in this debate. We have an extensive body of knowledge in social learning that shows that our most profound and deeply held attitudes are formed in early childhood with our parents providing the models. The crucial link between parents and schooling was recently recalled by James Coleman (1987) in his book on private and Catholic schools. Coleman points out that private schools represent an orientation that see the school not as an agent of society but as an agent of the family, with authority vested *in loco parentis*.

If we wish to reduce prejudice, it would seem that the most enduring, most compelling change would come from parents who, persuaded by religious, moral and ethical concerns. and their own sense of justice, might serve as role models in showing their children racial acceptance and tolerance. But rather than rely on persuasion and an appeal to the reason and good will of men and women, those who favor coercive social policies find it more convenient and satisfying to

relay on force. It is, to say the least questionable, to take this responsibility from parents; only to add it to the long and growing list of tasks that have been imposed on the schools.

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